

THE PARABLE OF THE BICYCLE.

BY R. WALTER WRIGHT, B.D.

"Without a parable spake he not unto them."—Matthew xiii. 34.

CHRISt spake in parables of things He saw in Palestine nearly 1900 years ago. If living in Canada to-day He would gather practical instruction from the locomotive, the trolley car, the electric light, the telephone. Hear ye therefore the parable of the bicycle.

I. THE MACHINE.

There are three principal parts, two wheels and a seat, representing three parts of human nature.

The hind wheel is the propulsive power, in human nature the emotional, the energy, the push of the individual. The good bicyclist pedals well—no one can be a success in life unless he can make it go. The moral philosopher would give these powers one name, the phrenologist another; some would call them force of character, others snap; their possession makes one man a whirlwind, a steam-engine, the lack of them makes another a drone, a snail. They made Caesar the warrior, Luther the reformer, Pitt the statesman. It is recorded of Hezekiah that he did it with all his heart and prospered. It was Paul's indomitable energy that like a mighty heart sent the gospel throbbing through the Roman empire.

The fore wheel is the guiding, balancing power. It is the intellectual in man. The psychologist would speak of perception, memory, judgment; the phrenologist of individuality, imitation, comparison; but others would be content to style it acuteness, or tact. No matter what strength a rider put into his back wheel, if he cannot manage the fore one he is soon in the dust or in the ditch. Propulsion is not everything in life; if a person has no judgment, no balance, down he goes. Benjamin Franklin the philosopher, Stephen Gerard the millionaire, Humphrey Davy the scientist, Abraham Lincoln the statesman, Wellington the invincible soldier, all succeeded largely by knowing how to manage the front wheels of their bicycles. Some great men even have been lamentably deficient in common sense; witness Dean Swift, Shelley and Beethoven. A man must manage his own fore wheel. Every man makes his own track. In the perfected safety bicycles of the present day, the wheels are of the same size. Activity and good sense should be likewise proportioned.

The seat is an important part, the throne of the supreme executive power. Emotion and intellect are great things, but above them is selfhood, will-power, conscience. Here is the seat of character, principle, true manhood. So we see the bicycle represents the whole inner man.

II. ITS MANAGEMENT.

The person who has confidence in himself and in the machine speedily becomes its master. A man who has no faith in himself and in his work is doomed to failure. When Calhoun was in Yale Col-

lege he firmly believed he could reach the Hall of Congress in the following three years. Faith in self, in man, in God, these are mighty matters, if we are to be successful riders on either material or spiritual wheels.

It is easier to ride fast than to go slow. It is less trouble to run an express train at sixty miles an hour than a mixed at ten. Everything clears the track for the lightning express, but the accommodation is side-tracked, broken up, bucked up, and bumped about, and trainmen must ever be on the alert. The hardest way in the world to live is barely to keep things going; true for any man—day-laborer, business man, Christian. No one ever feels so well as when living on fast schedule time; it is hard work to go slow. Push hard on the pedals of prayer and self-denial and Christian work and it becomes a pleasure.

We must learn to overcome difficulties. No one is a rider till he can climb hills, push through a piece of bad road, and face a north-wester. Many give up trying to be Christians because the effort is fatiguing, but if we cannot wheel up a heavy grade we need not expect to reach the New Jerusalem.

If you wish to avoid a thing do not look at it. If you fix your eyes on a stone, crash into that stone you will go. Do not fix your eyes upon life's dangers and obstructions, think of the path of duty rather than of the stones in it. Look ahead, be hopeful. Somebody snubs you. You look at it till what was only an insignificant little bit of a snub becomes as big as a bank barn.

A good rider learns to avoid ruts and stones. Sometimes in spite of all effort he will run into one; so sometimes in life we may run into somebody, encounter someone's wrath, but generally, save when a matter of principle is involved, to have a collision or to strike a stone means lack of skill. A man who is always bumping into something is a poor rider. A man may say, I'm going straight ahead, I don't care what comes. But the good bicyclist knows how to wiggle around rough places. Another says, "I'll teach this fellow a lesson, I will," and he pitches right into him. He teaches him about as much as the wheelman teaches the stone or the puddle, rolls him over, or stirs him up, but breaks his own machine, bruises his own limbs, and spoils his clothes.

He learns to oil his wheel and keep plenty of air in the tubes.

When the Lord was making human nature, He not only put in feelings and brains, and moralities, but he oiled all up with good nature, and filled the tires of life with humor; He made a man who could be glad, who could think, who could pray, and also who could laugh. You take up a Christian paper, it may be the Epworth Era, and you find pages of solid, helpful reading, and then you come to a funny column, jokes and humor. Someone says, "They might have left those things out." No, no! When God made man He put in poetry and argument and sermons, but he also put in a funny column. Every church, every convention, every home, needs a funny column, a person who sees the humorous

side of things. Sometimes there is nothing but vinegar in the goblet of life, and then somebody comes along with the alkali of the ridiculous, pours it in, there is an effervescence, and the goblet bubbles over with fun. Pump up your pneumatics if you wish a smooth ride through life.

III. THE MANAGER.

A wheel without a rider is useless. Men are more than machinery. Never had the Church such complete organization as now, but the constant call is for good, strong, skilful men and women to manage and make it mightily effective. More bicycles than good riders, more musical instruments than musicians, more Sunday Schools classes than good teachers, more pulpits than good preachers. Character, spiritual life, is more than muscle, than brains, than books, than machinery.

A good rider rides almost unconsciously; his wheel becomes a part of himself; as the pen in the hand of a skilful penman, or the keyboard under the fingers of an accomplished musician. Absolute control—this is Christian character in its highest form. Christ on the seat! Everything in life, being, character dominated by the living man, the man himself, the willing servant—slave—of Jesus Christ; this is perfect action, life, character. The hard work of pedalling and balancing life's wheel becomes easier and easier, till finally it becomes automatic. Always effort, always watchfulness it is true, but no longer a grievous machine, an awkward externality to be managed. What is the matter with the drunkard, the swearer, the impure person, the miser! Alas, he does not know how to manage his wheel; it flings him!

Arthur, Ont.

A BOY'S RELIGION.

THE late Henry Drummond said to a company of boys: "Boys, if you are going to be Christians, be Christians as boys, and not as your grandmothers. A grandmother has to be a Christian as a grandmother, and that is the right and beautiful thing for her; but if you cannot read your Bible by the hour as your grandmother can, or delight in meetings as she can, don't think that you are necessarily a bad boy. When you are your grandmother's age you will have your grandmother's religion."

Now, there is a great deal in the above for a boy to take to heart, for some boys have the idea that they will be expected to put aside most of their propensities if they take upon themselves the duties of Christian boys. This is a mistake. No one expects, no one wants them to give up the natural rights and feelings of boyhood. They are not to be in the least grandmotherly or grandfatherly, but they are to be happy in the way that God intended all youth should be happy.

One of the truest-hearted Christian boys I know is also the merriest. No one would think of calling him "grandmotherly." He reads his Bible, too, and goes regularly to church, to Sunday School and to prayer meeting.